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ABSTRACT

This essay outlines the major changes in Swedish educational policy that occurred during the 20-year period from 1976 to 1996, with a focus on key issues in the development of the comprehensive school. Effects of the policy changes on Swedish curriculum research over the last 20 years are examined. Educational researchers neglected or were slow to respond to changes in the educational system that resulted from the breakdown of the Swedish model and dismantling of the welfare state. Other conclusions are that the feminist perspective is absent in curriculum research in Sweden; there is a conflict between decentralization and educational goals; the "subject didactical" studies represented a new way to study the relations between curriculum and teaching/learning; and there is a need to develop educational theory in general and curriculum theory in particular. (Contains 26 endnotes and 109 references.) (LMI)

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The End of Idealism or Whatever Happened to the Swedish Comprehensive School?

Further lessons from a comprehensive school system for curriculum theory and research

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Preface[1]

Twenty years ago I had the pleasure to organize an invited symposium on "European Curriculum Theory and Research" at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. The contribution from Sweden was entitled "*Lessons from a comprehensive school system for theory and research on curriculum*" (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1976).[2] In the paper we dealt with curriculum theory and research in regard to the historical antecedents, the implementation and the subsequent developments of the Swedish comprehensive school. This allowed us to critically examine the influence of curriculum theory and research in the reform process. The view put forward strongly emphasized curriculum theory and research as a pedagogical problem[3] and thus the concern of pedagogy (or education) as a scientific discipline.

> "*In our opinion, the task of pedagogy as a science is to describe the pedagogic practice prevailing in the society and to work out theories which can explain the causal relationships giving rise to such practise. The immediate causes are, in their turn, rooted in the overall structure of the society. In this way pedagogy can - within an analysis of the scope for action within a given social structure and its probable dynamics offers different social forces as its starting point - outline a limited number of strategies which are possible and try to ascertain the consequences of their application.*" (*Callewaert & Kallós*, 1976, p. 181)

In our original paper we also noted that the very concept of curriculum was vaguely defined and used (cf. more recent discussions and analyses by *Hamilton*, 1989, pp. 35ff and e.g. *Jackson*, 1992). We argued that curriculum studies

> "*... cannot be primarily focussed on <u>how</u> a curriculum should be constructed or developed , but must primarily explain the determinants of the curriculum. The first issue thus concerns the question of why a certain type of curriculum becomes necessary under a certain set of circumstances. This does not imply that curriculum research has completely neglected this issue. But it implies that the traditional answers have been very limited in scope, where curriculum is e.g. regarded as an answer to certain demands in the society. <u>Why</u> these demands dominate or <u>why</u> certain groups in society are in the position of exerting an influence on the curriculum is never questioned ... What is implied here is the task of not only registering various influences and seek technological solutions to meet them, but rather an analysis of the various pressures and their political and economic implications and background. ... The problem is thus <u>why</u> certain particular demands are important at a certain stage in history and what mechanisms that allow these demands to become influential in the educational sector, and finally how that influence is exerted and legitimized.*" (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1979b, p. 183)

Using frame-factor theory (cf. *Dahllöf*, 1971; *Lundgren*, 1972; *Kallós & Lundgren*, 1979b, pp. 20ff) as a point of departure (cf. also *Johnson*, 1977) we also linked our arguments to the concepts and theories developed by e.g. *Bernstein* (1971) and *Bourdieu & Passeron* (1970). This approach enabled us to analyze curricular issues in a macro perspective (curriculum and educational planning, schooling and curriculum) and in

a micro perspective (curriculum and teaching) where concepts of power, control and governance became crucial in empirical and theoretical analyses of the Swedish comprehensive school but also helped us to understand differences and similarities between Sweden and other countries. This also meant a break with earlier Swedish traditions in curriculum research which during the period after 1945 to a large extent were borrowed from the United States (cf. also *Kallós*, 1975; *Kallós & Lundgren*, 1975) and at least for one of us also to a close relation to Marxist theory (*Kallós*, 1978; 1980; 1981; 1982).

In retrospective it is perhaps possible to state that frame-factor theory in a developed form is used in the presentation to AERA twenty years ago in order to critically analyze curriculum development in Sweden using the comprehensive school as a case. At the same time a critique of theory and research on the curriculum is offered and this critique is also levelled at dominant trends in educational research as such.

Introduction

The present paper should be understood against the background sketched out in the preface. This means that we will continue to use the Swedish comprehensive school and curriculum theory and research related to it as a case.

Towards the end of the sixties and in the early seventies Swedish educational research changed rather drastically. The earlier dominance of logical empiricism was broken, educational psychology became increasingly marginalized and American influences were no longer as prominent as had been the case. The paper delivered to the AERA conference in 1976 (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1976) mirrors this development and is a part of it. The research that emerged presented powerful alternatives within conventional areas of educational (or pedagogical) inquiry. Thus e.g. research on educational planning, the meaning of educational reform, teaching and educational history were impregnated by new theories and methods. What may broadly be conceived as curriculum theory and research was an important arena for these shifts within educational research as such that took place during this period.[4]

Curriculum theory and research had already emerged as a central field of inquiry within the discipline of education in Sweden. It was originally closely related to the State bureaucracy and part of the political decision

process in the period after the Second World War when the foundations for the comprehensive school reform were laid. The new research was not only different theoretically (influenced also by research in Great Britain, France and West-Germany[5]) but also had a more complex and contradictory relation both to the State bureaucracy and to the academic discipline of education[6] (i.e. to the universities). The breakdown of the dominant logical empirical paradigm in Sweden was, however, not unique. Similar tendencies were visible throughout the Western world in the late sixties and early seventies.

In regard to curriculum theory and research, and the shifts described and analyzed in the AERA-paper twenty years ago (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1976), the Swedish case offers some noteworthy characteristics. Firstly, Sweden at that time had introduced a comprehensive school system which was commonly regarded as an essential part of the establishment of a Social Democratic Welfare State. Radical educational researchers in e.g. Great Britain and West-Germany, at that time, fought in vain for a national comprehensive school.[7] Swedish radical research accordingly could analyze and position itself in regard to a school that existed in reality and not just as a 'dream'. Secondly, Sweden is a rather small country. The comprehensive school was national and rather highly centralized, practically no independent (or private) schools existed, and curriculum theory and research could thus adress national issues characterized, at least to a substantial degree, by uniformity. Thirdly, the comprehensive school in Sweden was regulated by nationally valid curriculum guides and syllabi. The strong position of educational research in Sweden and the links between the educational research community, the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education paradoxically also paved the way for the development of a critical position and a break with logical empiricism (and positivism) within curriculum theory and research. Curriculum theory and research thus became one of the most important areas in a change process within educational research as such in Sweden. This process probably reached its climax around the time of the AERA-presentation in 1976 or a few years later.

In 1976 the comprehensive school was an established and accepted reality. It had already received its second nationally valid curriculum guide. The comprehensive school was accordingly taken for granted and considered to be in a state of continuous and stepwise amelioration. Even left-wing politicians saw no alternative to the comprehensive school although they did not regard it as perfect. At the same time, however, the economic expansion of the education sector began to come to a stop.

Reallocation of funds rather then an inrease of funding was the new slogan. The strong centralist tendencies were accordingly also questioned in the mid-seventies. The early seventies was also a period when the right-wing critique of the comprehensive school was formulated (cf. *Lundahl*, 1990).

The period between 1976 and 1996 is characterized by a series of events that in many respects have altered both the very idea and material reality of the Swedish Welfare State, and thus also its education sector. Educational researchers have responded in various ways to these changes. In a twenty-year perspective we would argue that the part played by educational research in relation to the development of the comprehensive school has been reduced and that curriculum research has declined.

In the following section we will very briefly outline the major changes in Swedish educational policy that took place between 1976 - 1996 also as they are related to changes in other sectors of the society. Our description attempts to highlight a number of key issues in regard to the development of the comprehensive school. These issues will subsequently be analyzed in relation to pertinent research in an attempt to position present Swedish curriculm theory and research by formulating the issues on the agenda today. Thus we will primarily try to formulate what we consider as major problems confronting Swedish curriculum theory and research today in the closing section of this paper.

Major changes in Swedish education policy 1976 - 1996

In 1976 a 44 year political hegemony of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden came to an end when a conservative coalition government came into power. After two election periods the social democrats returned in 1982. *Murray* (1995) summarizes Swedish education policy between 1976 - 1982 in the following way:

> *"It seems more evident today than at the time, that the conservative coalition governments in 1976-1982 in practice rather fulfilled a social-democratic policy than introduced a new one. The most obvious expression of this is the National Curriculum Guide 'Lgr 80' ... It is natural to regard Lgr 80 as a completion of social democratic policy in a number of dimensions:*
> *- integrated teaching in social and natural sciences,*
> *- emphasis on a renewal of teaching methods,*
> *- reduction of the role and significance of marking/grading*
> *- emphasis on a unified comprehensive school limiting the role of options and differentiation."* (*Murray*, 1995, p. 6. Our translation.)

During this period other decisions were taken that also reflect the same

tendency. The introduction of a new system to stimulate local school development and in-service teacher education is one example. Decisions concerning the 'inner work of schools' resulting in partly changed organizational principles and the introduction of certain decentralization measures is another example (cf. *Kallós*, 1982).

Although we agree with the thesis that the period between 1976-1982 may be understood as a 'fulfilment of social democratic education policy' we wish to point out that the Conservative Party had launched severe attacks on social democratic policy prior to the 1976 election. A key aspect of these attacks concerned education policy (*Lundahl*, 1990). It was, however, not politically possible to take but a few steps to implement the changes that the Conservative Party advocated during the period in question, which at least is part of an answer of why the education policy cannot be described simply as an expression of an emerging 'new right'.

The Social Democrats won the election in 1982 and stayed in power until 1991. In 1982 data had already been presented that produced a very gloomy picture of the results of the comprehensive school reform in terms of its effects on social equality within the school, of equal opportunity etc. (cf. *Kallós*, 1982). Instead of launching a new program for the development of the comprehensive school the Social Democratic Party choose to adopt a very defensive policy which also, for instance, included a passive acceptance of certain aspects of the 'back-to-basics-movement'. A remodeled program of teacher education for the comprehensive school was introduced (cf. *Kallós & Selander*, 1993; *Kallós*, 1995), and decisions were taken to transform the upper secondary school, whereby all programs at that level were to be of three years duration.

Towards the end of the period the issues of governance and decentralization were at the top of the agenda and governance through goals and results was introduced as the new strategy to replace what was labelled as 'governance through rules'. Directives were given to a Committee to change the Curriculum Guides for the comprehensive school and for the upper secondary school along these lines. Teachers were declared as professionals and were no longer to be employed by the State but instead by the municipalities, which also were to have an increased responsibility and influence on matters of schooling. The very icon of centralized bureaucratic governance - The National Board of Education - was dissolved and a new national authority took its place, but with more limited and more clearly defined tasks. The new National Agency for Education became operational on July 1, 1991.[8]

In the fall election 1991 the Social Democrats were defeated once more. The new Government was headed by the Conservative Party, which now was the largest and most influential party within the four-party coalition government that was formed. The neo-liberal ideology now had become dominant within the Conservative Party and it is significant that the Party took over the Ministry of Education and dominated education policy making between 1991 and 1994.

The situation in 1991 was politically quite different from that in 1976. During this period neo-liberalism reaches a peak in Sweden and education policy becomes one of the key areas for change. Education policy is declared to be transformed as a way of making a 'system shift' visible. Thus new directives were given to the Committee working on the new curriculum guide and its members were exchanged (cf. *Carlgren*, 1995a). A new system for State allocation of economic resourses to the municipalities was introduced, private/independent schools were promoted as well as parental choice within the municipal school system, a new National Curriculum Guide was adopted where subjects are strengthened and subject integration weakened, and a new system of marking/grading was introduced. The earlier catchwords equality of opportunity, equivalent standards, 'a school for all' etc. fade out and concepts like 'competition', 'free choice', 'excellence', 'efficiency and productivity', 'quality' etc. are gradually becoming dominant elements of the new discourse (cf. *Ahlström & Kallós*, 1995; *Carlgren*, 1995a; *Englund*, 1994a; 1994b; *Kallós & Lindblad*, 1994; *Kallós & Nilsson*, 1995).

Murray (1995, p. 15) notes that the efficiency and rapidity of change between 1991-1994 partly can be explained by the fact that the social democrats had 'laid the table' by the decentralization measures and the decisions concerning changed municipal authority taken in 1991.

The Social Democratic Party returned after the elections in 1994. They formed a minority government. The unemployment rate had reached levels which turned 'full employment' into a concept only used nostalgically, budget deficits were staggering, and Sweden by a very narrow margin in a referendum decided to join the European Community. The social democrats won the election mainly due to widespread popular discontent in regard to the neo-liberal attacks on the Welfare system where all aspects of the social security system had been possible and real targets for change in a neo-liberal direction. The social democrats promised very little in the election campaign. Indeed they reiterated the need to cut the State budget, but they promised to do so with social responsibility and in regard to traditional social democratic values. At the

same time a split within the party was fairly visible between the spokespersons of a traditional social democratic economic policy that aimed at restoring the Welfare State, and those that stressed the need to envision a new agenda for the Party reflecting the harsh economic neccessities on the one hand and the end of the 'modern project' on the other.

Interestingly enough education policy in a way has not been a prominent area for those who want to restore the Welfare State, nor has it received close attention from their opponents within the party. Education policy in regard to the comprehensive school at present is seemingly and surprisingly not a key issue. In its turn this must also be evaluated against the background that the conservative coalition government put all issues concerning education policy very high on their agenda.

Major curriculum research in Sweden 1976-1996

In this section we will attempt to present a brief and highly selective overview of major Swedish curriculum research during the last 20 years. We will focus on such research that we consider has a bearing on theoretical development within the field and/or represents major empirical contributions. The review is also selective in another way. We have primarily mentioned research that in our view raises new issues or problems which we consider important in order to understand the situation today and research that chronologically followed in the footsteps of what was described in 1976. In the following section we will return to several of the studies mentioned below.

Crucial concepts in order to analyze the Swedish comprehensive school are equal opportunity, uniformity and equivalence. In the late seventies and in the early eighties a number of studies were presented that demonstrated the differences within the comprehensive school in terms of equal opportunity, uniformity and equivalence. They empirically showed that pupils were treated differently inside the school and that schools were segregated in terms of social class as a consequence of residential policies and in various ways were able to show how primarily pupils from the working class (which to a growing part consisted of immigrant children) were dis-favoured within the school (*Arfwedson*, 1985; *Arnman & Jönsson*, 1983; *Callewaert & Nilsson*, 1979; 1980). The study of Arfwedson theoretically used frame-factor theory and is also influenced by *Bernstein* (1977) while Callewaert and Nilsson theoretically are closer to Bourdieu (*Bourdieu & Passeron*, 1970) and to contemporary German and French

Marxist writings. These studies provided data on the level of schools, classrooms and teaching and thus provided insights into the mechanisms of symbolic violence, differentiation among pupils and on how teaching is influenced by the social composition of the school class.

Interestingly enough a large number of studies based on various statistical data carried out by Kjell Härnqvist and his co-workers in Gothenburg also reported very disappointing results in terms of the social effects of the comprehensive school. According to Härnqvist it is questionable if it is possible to achieve equality even using such a weak criterion as equal participation of different social groups within the educational system. And he adds:

> *"The step to equal results and equal effects of schooling on standards of living is even larger. To me, who has been concerned with these questions for the better part of my career it is bitter, indeed, to have to recognize, the 'the limits of educational reform' (Carnoy & Levin, 1976) may be just around the corner."* (*Härnqvist*, 1980, p. 8. Our translation.)

Ulf P. Lundgren and his co-workers continued and devloped their studies within the frame-factor theory (*Lundgren*, 1981). A number of empirical studies were for instance presented at an AERA-symposium in 1979 (*Lundgren & Pettersson*, 1979). In this context a study by Gunilla *Svingby* (1978) on how curriculum guides govern the comprehensive school in Sweden may also be mentioned as well as a study by Lindensjö and Lundgren on political governance and educational reforms (*Lindensjö & Lundgren*, 1986). Another study by *Lundgren* (1986) dealt with issues of school organization and school leadership.[9]

An important development within Swedish curriculum research is represented by a number of historically oriented studies. *Englund* (1986a; 1986b) thus wrote about curriculum as a political problem with special emphasis on the development of citizenship education. He uses frame-factor theory as a point of departure but the studies also represent an important contribution to the emerging field of curriculum history where particular school subjects and their development are studied.

Ulla *Johansson* (1987) was interested in the very mechanisms whereby new subjects are included in the curriculum and used examples from the turn of the century and introduced a gender perspective on the issues studied. She had worked together with Christina Florin, who published an important and influential study on the processes of feminization and professionalization of teachers' work in Sweden at the turn of the century (*Florin*, 1987). Lisbeth *Lundahl* (1989) presented a study of the education policy of the Swedish Conservative Party between 1904-1962 which also

dealt with political standpoints in regard to the curriculum.

The studies mentioned here made important empirical and theoretical contributions which also departed from those found in more conventional and a-theoretical studies of Swedish education history in general (e.g. *Marklund*, 1980ff; and *Richardson*, 1978, 1983).

A fourth group of studies are those concerned with particular issues in the development of Swedish policy in regard to the comprehensive school and its curriculum. *Odin & Åhs* (1985) studied the effects on schools of changes in the system to finance the school as part of the decentralization process implemented in the late seventies. *Stenelo* (1988) edited a volume where various effects of decentralization policies were studied and analyzed. *Lidström* (1991) studied political decision-making on the level of the municipalities resulting from decentralization. The decisions taken in the early eighties to implement a new strategy for local school development and curricular inventions were studied empirically by *Carlgren* (1986). *Rönnerman* (1993) also studied this strategy, but with particular emphasis on the elementary school teacher and from a feminist perspective.

The local school and its organization and how the curriculum was implemented and realized by schools and teachers was an important area of research both to the National Board of Education and to several researchers. On the one hand studies were carried out within the perspective of the school as an organization (cf. *Wallin & Berg*, 1982; *Berg*, 1983) where the realization of fundamental aims of the comprehensive school was studied in terms of how these aims had been achieved in the everyday work within schools (cf. also *Berg*, 1989). On the other hand studies examining and analyzing newly implemented strategies for curriculum development at the level of the local school and by groups of teachers were carried out (e.g. *Lindblad*, 1994). The first group of studies mentioned here in principle regard discrepancies between intentions (aims or goals) and outcomes (actual achievement) as failures reflecting defects or shortcomings. Goals or aims are for instance ambiguous and/or the actors (schools, teachers) have not developed a necessary 'extended professionalism'. The studies summarized by *Lindblad* (1994), that were carried out in the eighties by him and his associates concerning teacher initiated development work[10], on the other hand regard teachers' work as constrained, and attempts to analyze actual teacher initiated change processes disregarding the relation between such efforts and 'intentions' as expressed e.g. in the curriculum guide. Focus is on the micro-politics of school work.

The studies mentioned above are also characterized by the use of various actors' perspectives such as school leaders' and teachers' perspectives. Many of the studies were interpretative in nature and concepts like 'understanding', 'conceptions' and 'meanings' became prominent. In comparison to international research on teachers' thinking the Swedish studies combined a teacher perspective with an emphasis on contextual factors (see e.g. *Carlgren & Lindblad*, 1991). These studies are also examples of the growing use of qualitative methods during the last twenty years. This leads us to the last group of studies that we want to mention in this section.

In the seventies new perspectives in the study of learning processes were developed by Ference Marton and his co-workers in Gothenburg (*Marton*, 1981). A methodology of qualitative analyses was advanced and focus was on variations in student conception of different contents of learning.[11]

In the 1980s a number of studies within this developing tradition of 'phenomenography' (cf. *Marton*, 1986a; 1995) were oriented towards teachers (*Larsson*, 1986) but primarily concerned pupils' learning of different concepts and subjects in the school (*Marton*, 1986b). These studies had a 'subject didactic' character but may also be regarded as another contribution to the gloomy pucture of the Swedish comprehensive school, since - as in international constructivistic research - these studies, within a qualitative analytical framework, described how pupils failed in developing the understanding strived for in subject teaching. 'Subject didactics' as a field of study within 'phenomenography', however, by many teachers and teacher educators was perceived as close to their interests. This appproach at least seemed to represent a promise of new instruments (methods) in teaching and a strategy in the educational sciences that appealed to the teachers and teacher educators also as an alternative to frame-factor theory. 'Subject didactics' also became a widely discussed concept in regard to its relations to other didactical traditions on the one hand, and its relations to curriculum theory on the other (cf. *Gundem*, 1992).

Some of the lessons from a comprehensive school system for curriculum theory and research

In this final section we will comment on a number of issues in regard to curriculum theory and research related to the development within the

field during the last twenty years on the one hand and to the development of Swedish education policy - particularly concerning the comprehensive school - on the other. These issues were implicitly and/or explicitly touched upon in the foregoing sections of this paper. The problems that we will take up here are directed towards the Swedish situation today, although in many respects they are part and parcel of a problematic that certainly applies to other countries as well. The points that we raise are to be regarded as a sample. Needless to say our list is by no means exhaustive.

1. As we have noted Swedish curriculum theory and research has been closely related to and contextualized by the development and changes of the Swedish school system. Swedish eductional researchers were for instance extensively used to carry out studies for various Parliamentary committees. The National Board of Education (NBE) commissioned and financed a large percentage of all externally funded Swedish educational research and a close relation existed between NBE, the Ministry of Education and the educational research community. In the mid-seventies the R&D model itself was being questioned, the relative dominance of the educational sciences in relation to research on the schools was broken and there were signs of a growing tension between the Ministry and NBE. The strong and central position of NBE not only in regard to educational research but also in regard to the implementation of policy decisions began to be questioned when decentralization emerged as an issue in the late seventies. The failure (or incapability) of the NBE to commission critical research or to take into account findings from such research should probably also be taken into account in this respect.[12]

The strong 'triangle' between the educational research community, NBE and the Ministry of Education, that was essential in implementing the comprehensive school, was beginning to fall apart in the late seventies and early eighties. The proposals of NBE to change the national curriculum guide of the comprehensive school published in 1978 (*Skolöverstyrelsen*, 1978) were thus heavily criticized and the ensuing Government proposal was regarded as signifying an increasing disagreement between NBE and the Government (*Prop.*, 1979). Contacts between the Government and NBE deteriorated and were not resurrected when the Social Democratic Party returned in 1982. It became obvious that the tensions implied a shift in balance between the Government and the Parliament on the one hand and the NBE on the other.[13] These tensions were heightened when decentralization and changed forms of governance in

matters of schooling became crucial political issues. As we have noted the NBE was shut down in 1991.

We hold that the development described above also affected Swedish research on curricular issues.

The NBE to a larger extent began to support research from other disciplines than education. Major studies on decentralization were for instance carried out by departments of Political Science (e.g. the studies reported in *Stenelo*, 1988, and mentioned in the foregoing section).

We hold that the relatively strong position of educational research in general and theory and research in curriculum in particular was weakened in the 1980's and at least parly as a consequence of the developments mentioned above. Educational researchers were caught in tensions between the political arena on the one hand and the central administrative arena on the other.

The close connections between major parts of the educational research community in Sweden and the central administrative body and to Government meant that critical research had an audience within the educational research community and thereby also a certain voice that affected the 'triangle' described here.[14] When that triangle was broken an important audience for curriculum research in general and for critically oriented curriculum research in particular became more and more absent. The establishment of the new National Agency for Education has not altered this situation, and the research program sponsored by the Agency, particularly if it is regarded in the light of the changed political and economic conjuncture during the 90's, does probably not alter the situation.[15]

2. In the 1980's issues of governance in general and decentralization in particular came into the fore in regard to the comprehensive school. Reflecting this interest Ulf P. Lundgren together with Bo Lindensjö - a political scientist - wrote a text that attempted to analyze and problematize the issues of political governace and educational reform using Sweden both as a case and as a target for critical examination (*Lindensjö & Lundgren*, 1986). The text may also be regarded as an extension of curriculum theory as frame-factor theory by its incorporation of theories from political science focussing as it is on the Swedish school reform process. The empirically oriented studies of the decentralization efforts (e.g. *Odin & Åhs*, 1986; *Stenelo*, 1988) pointed to the limits and constraints of the strategies used as means towards the achievement of the overall aims of the comprehensive school.

The changes of the Swedish education sector, studied for instance in the texts mentioned above, in our view point to a more fundamental problem that to a large degree has been neglected by Swedish educational researchers. We refer to what we would consider as a breakdown of the so called Swedish Model from the seventies and onwards.

The relations between the Swedish State, capital and labour in the 1940s to the 1960s formed a very special pattern which made the establishment of the Welfare State possible that also included the educational reforms (e.g. the establishment of a comprehensive school). The Swedish model rested on three pillars: industrial rationalization and restructuring, an active labour-market policy and an equitable wage policy. From the seventies the pattern of economic growth is broken and controversies between the strong organizations[16] at the labour market become more obvious. The Social Democratic hegemony was broken. After a continuous expansion severe cuts in the public sector (health and social care, child care, schools etc.) characterize the 1980s and 90s. An aggressive Conservative Party also gains open political support from the Swedish Employers Confederation during this period.[17] The developments particularly in relation to schools during period were briefly outlined in an earlier section of this paper.

It is obvious that Swedish curriculum researchers responded very late to these changes in society as such although changes in the education sector were studied. The responses where the development within the education sector are analyzed as expressions in a wider context are only emerging and are still insufficient (cf. eg. *Kallós & Lindblad*, 1994). *Murray* (1995. p. 53f) asks why educational researchers responded so slowly to the changes in the education sector that was a part of the breakdown of the Swedish model and a dismantling of the Welfare State. The question is certainly legitimate.

3. In our attempt to draw conclusions from existing Swedish curriculum research and the relations between such research and the social, political and economic context within which it is situated some issues stand out. We have noted that gender issues have been prominent in important research which is historically oriented (e.g. *Florin*, 1987; *Johansson*, 1987; *Berge*, 1992). The study by Karin *Rönnerman* (1993) on development work in schools by female teachers analyzed the results within a feminist perspective. Else-Marie *Staberg* (1992) studied how girls and boys meet physics, chemistry and technology at the upper level of the comprehensive school in a study entitled "*Different Worlds, Different Values*". A number

of reports from the National Agency for Education and from the Ministry of Education has dealt with gender issues (e.g. *Utbildningsdepartementet*, 1993; 1994). In spite of all this we still strongly feel that a feminist perspective is rather absent in contemporary Swedish educational research in general and thus also in curriculum research. This deficit becomes particularly obvious if we take into account the agenda for such research analyzed and discussed by e.g. *Weiner* (1994) and by *Yates* (1995). In the current economic and political situation in Sweden it is also noteworthy that the issue of social class is not prominent in curriculum research as such and also almost absent in feminist studies in the field. The issues raised in two fairly recent studies, however, are examples of studies that in our view represent fruitful and partly new themes in curriculum theory and research. We refer to a study by Gun *Malmgren* (1992) on 'upper secondary school cultures' on the one hand and studies by Elisabet *Öhrn* (1993; 1995) on open resistance by girls in the comprehensive school on the other. In conclusion we are, however, forced to note that Sweden perhaps may be ahead in terms of equlity in a number of domains in the society. Curriculum research is not one of them.[18]

4. We have repeatedly pointed out that issues of governance and decentralization have become prominent issues on the agenda in regard to education policy and curriculum research. In relation to curriculum theory and research we wish to emphasize the re-emergence of models of governance in Sweden where objectives, goals or aims play an important role. Decentralization in Sweden has been presented as implying a shift from a rule governed school system to governance through goals and results. It is rather obvious that decentralization in terms of delegation of decisions from the central level of the State to municipalities, schools and teachers becomes a rather meaningless course of action if the periphery in actuality has nothing to decide about. Accordingly certain parts of the rule system had to be replaced by new rules of a more open character. In such a context the re-introduction of the old curriculum couple goals and results becomes problematic. If and when the goals (or the aims, or the objectives) are formulated in terms of desired pupil achievements (or behaviors) the changes implied, reintroduces at least a variant of the Tyler-rationale[19] and furthermore the debate in the field of curriculum evaluation in the late sixties and early seventies comes to mind as does the critique of rational planning models and the goal paradigms in organizational theory.

However, if the restructuring of the school system is regarded as an ex-

pression of intended changed relations (between the State, the municipalities, the schools, and the teachers) then goals (aims, objectives) have another intended meaning and function (*Carlgren*, 1995b). Governance by goals and results in such a case aims at evoking activities through the process of interpretation. Central authorities hold that they do not intend to prescribe what should be done and how, but presuppose that things are done in the direction spelt out by their formulations of the overall goals. The Swedish curriculum guide and syllabi are accordingly characterized by relatively few and rather open goals in comparison to the national curricula of e.g. England, Australia and Norway. It is, however, rather clear that municipalities, schools and teachers interpret the system of steering by goals and results far more as an expression of what curricular theorists have labelled as the Tyler-rationale. Swedish researchers in the curriculum field have been remarkably silent in regard to these developments and favoured other areas of inquiry in regard to the issues of decentralization.[20]

5. The 'subject didactical' studies by Marton and his co-workers represented a new way of studying the relations between curriculum and teaching/learning. We agree with our Norwegian colleague Bjørg *Gundem* (1992, p. 67) when she states that the frame-factor curriculum theory as it developed and the phenomenographically oriented 'subject didactics' "*could have lived their own lives without disturbing each other too much*". She continues:

> "*But then something happened making the correct understanding of the meaning of didactics of national importance. In 1984-1985 didactics was introduced in Swedish teacher training as a superordinate way of thinking about the tasks embedded in schooling. Didactics as a theory and craft is to be mastered by all prospective teachers. ... It became important to determine whose version of didactics was the legitimate one.*" (*Ibid., p. 68*)

To complicate matters further 'subject didactics', did not develop out of the German didactical tradition, nor did it develop from a critique of curriculum theory. It developed out of learning theory and in relation to phenomenography.[21] In the period after 1985, as Gundem indicates, there has been an increased interest in Sweden also to regain contacts with the German didactical tradition.[22] In an international perspective the Swedish debate reflects the renewed interest in exploring the relations between didactics and the curriculum tradition (see e.g. *Hopmann & Riquarts*, 1995a). We might add that we feel that German didactics is deeply rooted in German traditions and situated in relation to school development there, while at the same time the concept of curriculum is deeply embedded in traditions from U.S.A. and the U.K. We could also add that

it has always been problematic to translate e.g. the Swedish term 'läroplan' and other key terms used in Swedish 'curriculum research' into English.[23]

In Sweden, however, the debate has been mainly confined to issues in teacher education and to the place and role of the academic discipline of education (or in Swedish *Pedagogik*) in the development of a research base in teacher education (cf. *Englund*, 1996). Thus the debate concerning curriculum theory and various forms of didactics in Sweden to an increasing degree also concerns the identity of *Pedagogik* as an academic discipline (cf. *Englund*, 1995).

6. At one level we certainly recognize the need to develop educational theory in general and curriculum theory in particular also as a part of an ongoing an necessary reflection of the socially constructed discipline of '*Pedagogik*' in Sweden.

An important aspect of frame-factor theory and how it developed, was its relation to 'grand-theory' within the social sciences. In comparison to U.S.A. it might perhaps be stated that many European educational researchers have regarded 'grand-theory' as a reasonable point of departure for educational research, whether the starting-point has been Weber, Durkheim or Marx. 'Grand theory' returned in Swedish educational research during the late sixties and in the seventies. Whether post-modern or not we strongly feel that the problems confronting the education sector today cannot be properly addressed by curriculum researchers if these problems are not situated within a theoretical understanding of the political, economic and social context to which they surely belong.

This does not imply that we regard curriculum research on e.g. the classroom level as superficial or non-interesting. But we still regard with some skepticism research which cannot contextualize itself outside the boundaries of the school or education policy as such.

Issues of class, gender and race[24] are pertinent examples where surely a wider theoretical approach than that provided by current curricular theories is needed and where even existing 'grand theorists' are insufficient.

If we return to the Swedish case, as it was presented twenty years ago, it illustrated the importance of the context for the development of curriculum theory and research. Swedish curriculum theory and research thus was anchored in a situation where the comprehensive school was a fact as well as a 'taken-for-granted idea' as a point of departure for research. The integration of frame-factor theory and 'grand social theory' was a

base for a research tradition that could analyze the shortcomings of the comprehensive school as well as point to the mechanisms and dynamics of stability and change. In contrast to instrumentally and idealistically oriented progressive educational research - and to the *'rose coloured wave'* (*Callewaert & Kallós*, 1976) which for a period was powerful in Sweden and in other countries - this research tradition illuminated the limits of educational reform and analyzed what could be accomplished under prevailing conditions. Today, even the comprehensive school project is not 'self-evident'.[25]

Another aspect of the previous context for curriculum research was what we referred to as the triangle between decision makers, administrators and researchers. According to some this triangle even formed a kind of network as a 'learning community', the importance of which was strengthened by the strongly centralized school system. It could, however, be argued that the significance, of the parts of the educational research community belonging to the network, to a large extent was to legitimize decisions, although the triangle was both a receiver and user of research and its results. To regard central authorities as receivers and users of educational research was thus considered natural and legitimate and partly formed the identity of the research community. An important aspect of this relation was that the triangle, in regard to the education sector, was firmly anchored in the idea of the comprehensive school as an enlightened project supported by the social democrats and all good liberals. The delayed reaction from educational researchers in relation to the restructuring of the Swedish Welfare State and its school system, referred to earlier, is at least partly explainable against this background and by the strong identification with central authorities among several educational researchers. If - as has been the case in Sweden - the relations between research and policy-making are changed, then the two main positions developed earlier - an instrumentally and a critically oriented position - have to be reflected upon and related also to the issue of the structuration of discourses.

Today Sweden once more has a government formed by the Social Democratic Party. The discourse and the social reality is, however, still impregnated by neo-liberal and conservative ideas and the changes in actual political, social and economic life acompanying them. The rapid changes brought about by the conservative coalition government in 1991-1994 e.g. in the education sector have not been strongly contested by the new Government. The fact that Sweden is now a member of the European community has also contributed to a new kind of internationalization in the

debate. Sweden is not as important in Sweden as before. Sweden is not only (or perhaps even primarily) to be compared to Sweden, but instead to other countries within the European Union.[26]

The context of Swedish research on the curriculum in the era described in this paper is also characterized by a shift from the national level to the local level mainly as a result of decentralization and the accompanying breakdown of the relations between researchers and the centre. The municipality, the local school and/or groups of teachers are no longer regarded as representing the whole. At the one hand diversity is emphasized, and on the other 'the local' is considered as a 'whole' in itself. This leads to fragmented research where the interdependence of the parts are not recognized, nor the relations between e.g. schools and other sectors of social life.

It is perhaps even necessary to seriously rethink and attempt to theoretically reformulate the very meaning and importance of the school in the light of a widening gulf between what is taught and discussed in schools and the increasing differences in the lives that people live. It is accordingly not only 'grand theory' but also 'grand questions' that have to be asked. This also implies the need to reconsider the audience of research in an era where public discourse is trivialized to an increasing extent. Again and again we are thus forced to remember that social reason cannot prevail if it is not transformed into social power.

Notes

1. This Preface is written by Daniel Kallós.

2. The original paper was subsequently revised and published (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1977; 1979a). Enlarged versions were published in book-form in German (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1978) and in English (*Kallós & Lundgren*, 1979b).

3. We thus entitled the book-length publication "*Curriculum as a Pedagogical Problem*" (*Kallós and Lundgren*, 1979b). Some years later *Englund* (1986a) published "*Curriculum as a Political Problem*" indicating, among other things, that the problems of curriculum theory and research should perhaps not primarily be regarded as disciplinary problems.

4. The development within educational (or pedagogical) research in Sweden was of course influenced by the fact that strong compartmentalization into various sub-specialities was and is non-existent in Sweden. Thus there are no departments of e.g. curriculum and instruction, educational psychology etc. There are only departments of education (or Pedagogy as they are still called in Sweden).

5. The new sociology of education in Great Britain in general and Basil Bernstein in particular, Bourdieu, Althusser and Poulantzas in France and Marxist writings from West-Germany could be mentioned in this context.

6. Towards the end of the 1960's and in the 1970's the hegemony of logical empiricism in the social sciences and within the discipline of education was questioned and subsequently broken. Questions about the nature of educational research were raised once more (cf. e.g. *Thomas*, 1972). This controversy was highly visible also in the Nordic countries (see *Nordiskt symposium*, 1973). E.g. marxism and hermeneutics were discussed in their relation to pedagogical research and main-stream research at that time came under heavy attack.

7. The Swedish comprehensive school provided something of a model for progressive educationalists (cf. *Nilsson*, 1989).

8. Cf. *Berg* (1992), *Lindblad & Wallin* (1993), *Kallós & Lundahl-Kallós* (1994) and *Kallós & Nilsson* (1995) for overviews and comments on the development of school policy during this period.

9. In the latter period of the Social Democratic government between 1982-1991, Ulf Lundgren was often used as an expert within the Ministry of Education (e.g. *duRietz et al*, 1987). He was actively involved in drafting the government proposals in 1990 concerning decentralization, governance by goals and results etc. (*Prop.*, 1990). In 1991 Lundgren was appointed as the first director general of the newly founded National Agency for Education.

10. The studies by *Carlgren* (1986) and *Rönnerman* (1993), referred to earlier, could also be mentioned in this context.

11. It should be noted that this development also represented a break with logical empiricism as well as with traditional learning theory particularly in its relation to educational process (cf. also *Marton & Säljö*, 1976).

12. In a cautiously written article by two prominent and influential educational researchers - Karl-Georg Ahlström and Erik Wallin - the effects of commissioned research financed by NBE was commented upon and it was stated that "*... the task of NBE's R&D cannot be confined to attempting to contribute towards the realization of the existing curriculum; it must also include a challenge of the curriculum and efforts to change it.*" They, however, noted that research "*... which is critical of the NBE's basic view is not*

supported, it is very soon checked... The main impediment lies in the fact that critical research cannot be integrated with the top priority problem areas, and also in the fact that there are so few bodies apart from the NBE which can provide financial resources for research of this kind" (*Ahlström & Wallin*, 1976, pp. 84-85).

13. A major task of NBE was to evaluate the Swedish school system. The fulfilment of that task had been a matter of controversy for a long time. When NBE launched a new national program of evaluation in 1989 it was severely criticized by leading Swedish educational researchers (*Dahllöf et al*, 1989) which added fuel to the debate of NBE as such.

14. It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of Swedish educational researchers supported the basic ideology of the comprehensive school. The attacks on what the Conservative Party labelled as a social democratic school policy gained very little if any support from educational researchers in the 80's and early 90's. They, however, got support in their attempts to dismantle the Welfare State and to change education policies from several professors and researchers in political economy.

15. For a rather different view see *Tuinjman & Wallin* (1995).

16. We refer to the Confederation of Trade Unions on the one hand and the Swedish Employers Confederation on the other.

17. Cf. e.g. *Johansson* (1994) for a detailed description and analysis of the Swedish model. See *Lundahl* (in press) for an analysis related to vocational education where the Swedish model was very visible.

18. It should be noted that the semi-offical publication "School research at the crossroads" (*Tuijnman & Wallin*, 1995), referred to in note 14, makes no mention at all of gender issues or feminist research.

19. Cf. *Kliebard* (1970) and the quite curious ways in which the Tyler-rationale now resurfaces (cf. *Kliebard*, 1995).

20. On the national level *Carlgren* (1995a) has described and analyzed the mechanisms by which the syllabi became much more conservative than was originally intended.

21. In the volumes edited by *Marton* (1986b), referred to earlier, *Englund & Svingby* (1986) however, make an attempt to link subject didactical research to Swedish curriculum theory.

22. For a comparison between the rather different developments in Sweden and Norway in this respect, see *Engelsen* (1990).

23. In this text we have used the term 'curriculum guide' as an approximation.

24. We have noted that social class as a concept is rather absent in curriculum research in Sweden today. We have furthermore noted that there are few gender stduies. Although Sweden today is confronted with racism, and although the number of immigrant children has been rapidly growing in Sweden during the last decades and thus a multitude of languages are now spoken by pupils in Swedish schools, this issue is almost neglected in current Swedish educational research excepting benevolent studies on multiculturalism or of Swedish as a second language. The combination of class, gender and race is accordingly nonexistent in Swedish educational research.

25. Interestingly enough an ideological shift is even noticeable in the newly adopted national curriculum guide which refers to the *compulsory school* and not as earlier to the *comprehensive school*.

26. This development implies a risk that curriculum research becomes disconnected from the concrete contexts of different countries and that traditional and superficial comparative research is strengthened. On the other hand the situation implies a serious challenge as it points to yet another reason to develop comparative curriculum theory and research.

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